Review

“Gender and Sexuality in South Africa and the Production of Systemic Inequalities”

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Abstract

Towards the latter half of apartheid in South Africa, the queer community became a central component in South Africa’s fight to end apartheid. The queer community was marginalized in both a legal and social sense because individuals chose to deviate away from the status quo. Laws and statues were implemented to make it a crime to engage in a consensual intimate act with a same gender loving partner. Queers or color were marginalized and treated in an inhumane manner by those in their community and society in general. This paper argues that gender and sexuality are social constructs that created social inequalities for people of color in South Africa. Those inequalities include inadequate healthcare, lack of quality education, and scarce employment opportunities for people of color due to their race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Keywords: Apartheid, queers of color, gender, sexuality, South Africa, inequalities

INTRODUCTION

The 1960s ushered in an era of black consciousness in South Africa, which led to a desire to push for black leadership and denounced alliances with white liberals. Blacks, in this context began breaking away from organizations such as the non-racial National Union of South African Students (Brown et al., 1991: 12) and began forming their own organizations such as the South African Students Organizations. Unrest and resistance to apartheid from the late 1960s well into the early 1990s became the norm for South Africa. Blacks, who were banned from attending certain universities, began attending schools in places that once looked down on their race. When the South African government tried to enforce a mandate forcing schools to teach the Afrikaans language, many blacks across nation protested, especially in Soweto near the site of the Hector Peterson museum, where a young black kid was shot and killed for trying to fight for his own education.

Towards the latter half of apartheid in South Africa, the queer community became a central component in South Africa’s fight to end apartheid. The queer community was marginalized in both a legal and social sense because individuals chose to deviate away from the status quo. Laws and statues were implemented to make it a crime to engage in a consensual intimate act with a same-sex partner. Queers or color were marginalized and treated in an inhumane manner by those in their community and society in general. This paper argues that gender and sexuality are social constructs that created social inequalities for people of color in South Africa. Those inequalities include inadequate healthcare, lack of quality education, and scarce employment opportunities for people of color due to their race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Literature review

Race is one of many social constructs that played a vital role in dividing South Africa’s population creating division between blacks and whites, and between the black and colored population. In South Africa, racial domination was encoded as a means of unifying white ethnic groups (Marx, 1997: 474). However, when parliament began implementing laws that discriminated against the queer community, South Africa became more divide pitting heterosexuals against those who identified as queer.

During apartheid, race and sexuality was a major method of control, as it related to black sexuality.
People of color, who identified as queer, became a kind of stock minor character in the pageant of nationhood in the 1990s, embodying the arrival of a radically new social order, and symbolically mediating conflicts over race and class (Munro, 2012: ix). Sex across the black-white racial spectrum was forbidden and miscegenation was intensely stigmatized. Reinforced by laws, which criminalized homosexuality, a deep-seated and widespread homophobia deterred the open expression or assertion of any sexuality. This was seen as a transgression (Posel, 2004: 54). Apartheid laws were strict, in that they literally created a second-class citizenship status for blacks and coloreds living in South Africa. This was especially true for those who identified as queer.

A person who identified as queer was not looked at as the symbol of South Africa’s democratic modernity due to the fact that homosexuality has long been a western phenomenon deeply contested and bound with the re-imagining of race, gender, and nation in the steeped in colonialism (Munro, 2012: viii). These constructs, along with South Africa’s history, have been a complex challenge for men and women who identifies as queer. South Africa in post-apartheid became more tolerant of those who choose to live an alternative lifestyle. An example of this was the new Bill of Rights introduced South Africa’s legislature body. These new rights consisted of freedom of expression and a revision of law dealing with censorship (Posel, 2004: 55). Moreover, the implications of these new rights suggest that sexual preference and gender equality was a matter of individual freedom, and any sexual violence against sexual preference or gender was a violation of those rights.

**Theoretical framework**

Sullivan (2003) asserts discourse surrounding and informing sexuality is best understood in a cultural and historical context, from both a hetero-normative and queer perspective. This can be informed by queer theory. Queer theory, which evolved out of the feminist movement, implies gender is part of the self. Queer Studies often use this post-structuralism theory as a way to examine socially constructed natures of sexual acts and identities of same-sex relationships. Sullivan (2003) argues that sexuality is a social construct of society where “men who love men are understood as having a female soul in a man’s body, and women who love women as having a masculine psyche, or sex drive in a woman’s body.” Although some individuals may look at homosexuality in this particular manner, masculinity and femininity is subjective, especially in context of how one carries oneself and his/her own personal security as it relates to notions of manhood and womanhood. As such, homosexuality challenges hetero-sexist normative hierarchy as it pertains to social norms that dominate western culture. Such challenges have led to changes in the interpretations and acceptance of the queer lifestyle.

Sartelle (1994) asserts that liberationists often argue that homosexuality is congenital. He states, the reason behind the shift is that the biological or no-choice model of homosexuality allows gays and lesbians to be accepted only by representing themselves as victims of desires over which they have no control (Sullivan, 2003: 30). Oftentimes, the choice model is supported by religious institutions, which argue that homosexuality is a choice which often fuels anti-gay propaganda because it supports the claim that if sexual orientation is a choice, then it is possible for homosexuals to make the ‘right’ choice and to practice heterosexuality (Sullivan, 2003: 30). Thus, Butler (1990), Wittig (1991), and other Sullivan (2003) support poststructuralist ideas; Wittig argues, heterosexuality is a complex matrix of discourses, institution, and so on that has become normalized in our culture, thus making particular relationships, lifestyles, and identities seem natural, a historical, and universal (Sullivan, 2003: 39).

Because there is no consensus in the literature regarding queer theory and homosexuality, scholars such as Molefi Asante, Sr. (2003) and Frances Cress Welsing (1991) both contend that homosexuality is a non-African social construct of the west, and to engage in such behavior jeopardizes Afro-centric principles of the black community. Asante asserts that homosexuality and lesbianism are deviations from Afro-centric thought (Asante, 2003: 72) because it perpetuates a loss of black manhood in black communities (Welsing, 1991). This loss of black manhood in the black community is seen as responsible for black racial suicide (Cole et al., 2003: 158). However, such assertions are not supported by contemporary research, especially as it pertains to countries in Africa.

In an anthropological study titled *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, Amadiume, describes in great detail how pre-colonial Igbo women often took on male roles in same-sex marriages to demonstrate their affluence, and exercise control over other women labor and reproduction (Amadiume, 1987: 72). Therefore, Amadiume argument and analysis of same-sex relations in pre-colonial Africa debunks the myth that Asante puts forth in his *Afrocentricity* manifesto that homosexuality is a non-African phenomenon and practice, because same sex relations has been a practice in Africa for quite some time.

Although it has been proven time after time that same-sex relations have always existed in Africa, some people still choose to believe that homosexuality is un-African. For example, in mid-1995 Robert Mugabe, President of
Zimbabwe declares that gays are perverts and their behavior is worse than that of pigs. Such views and actions by the president encouraged the general population to take the law into its own hands, to report, arrest, and deport all homosexuals because homosexuality was seen in conflict with black culture (Hoad, 2005: 200-201). Such homophobic statements encouraged and acted as a breeding ground for violence against the black African queer community. Such violence have resulted in many black gay and lesbian youth fleeing small conservatives cities within the South Africa and flock to Johannesburg, a liberal city that is more tolerant of queer individuals (Reid et al., 2002: 99), even though some may argue that Johannesburg on paper is liberal, but in practice not so much.

The historical and theoretical development of sexuality in migration argues that the dual notion of sexuality including one that is produced by the intersection of other social identities such as class and race — queer studies derived the idea that sexuality goes against the norms of heterosexual institutions and practices (Manalansan, 2006: 224). As such, scholars suggest that gender and sexuality have been socially constructed in that it infringes negatively on those individuals whose lifestyle challenges the hetero-normative status quo. Building upon intersectionality scholarship — the study of race, gender, class, and sexuality —hooks (1990), Collins (1991), and Harper (1993) argue that homophobic violence is, the subject of black masculinity and its linkage with a lack of power within a racist and sexist society (Reid et al., 2002: 101) perpetuates the status quo with regards to homophobic violence. Such a phenomenon coupled with an already strained economy, where high levels of unemployment exist, results in black men using violence as a way to assert power and control over their own masculinity.

Social Construction of Gender and Sexuality

In today’s society, the term queer is used in a political and theoretical sense that contends sexuality. Social institutions and practices that normalize and naturalize heterosexuality and heterosexual practices discipline this contention. This includes but not limited to marriage, family, and biological reproduction; and by marginalizing people, institutions, or practices that deviate away from the hetero-social norm (Manalansan, 2006: 225). Manalansan’s definition of the term ‘queer’ is much more inclusive of all LGBT individuals, and signifies the intersectionality of identities, practices, and institutions, mainly gender and sexuality

Gender and sexuality are two forms of social constructs that place heavy emphasis on gender performances and intimate acts of sex itself. This research examines race, class, gender, and sexuality in the context of producing global inequalities, with an extreme focus South Africa. Inequalities addressed in this research are the social and economic disadvantaged queers of color face in a hetero-normative society, a society that often tolerate queers, but still chooses to shun and ostracize them due to their desire to live an alternative lifestyle. Using queer theory, this paper argues that cultural factors in Africa and HIV/AIDS pandemic have contributed to tremendous amounts of inequalities in healthcare, education, and employment as it pertains to the social constructs of gender and sexuality.

A social constructions or institutions are defined as an inept concept of endurance that persists and is not ephemeral (Martin, 2004: 1250). Oftentimes, when gender acts as a social institution it is a concept that is equated with control, facilitated by power. Martin (2004) asserts sociologists equate social institutions with ideas, norms, values, or beliefs with no attention to process or practices (Martin, 2004: 1251). Institutions within a society expect women to adhere to the domestic sphere such as cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the kids. Such societal expectations are constructed around clusters of appropriate activities and procedures (Martin, 2004: 1251). Gender is socially constructed not only by society, but also by institutions, which often filters into public policy.

One such social construction is the construct of religion. Religion is one of the biggest social institutions that construct gender and sexual roles for men and women. Religion is used to construct meanings and symbols of sexuality and gender roles within African communities. Patriarchy continues to have a domineering effect on women’s role in African communities. Lawal asserts, women in patriarchal societies, have suffered various degrees of discrimination, segregation, inequality, oppression and marginalization (Lawal, 2011: 271) thus limiting many women’s economic, political, educational, and religious aspiration. Sexuality has many different definitions and is often placed into cultural contexts. When discussing gender and sexuality in a broad context, society uses the generic definitions of sex and gender. Sex refers to the female and male physiology and their respective sex organs, while gender refers to the roles attributed to men and women in society (Lawal, 2011: 272).

Moreover, the physical act of sex involves penetration and sexual practices that involves anal or oral sex. Therefore, “sexuality encompasses a set of ideas, meanings, and social practices such as sexual behavior monogamy, polygamy, and polyandry. While sexual identity includes heterosexual, homosexual, bi-sexual, trans-sexual, sexual desire; sexual relations, and sexual politics (Lawal, 2011: 273), this also includes religion.
Both Christianity and Islam are two of the biggest religious institutions that preach about the subjugation of women, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. Both religious institutions speak to the dichotomy of men and women, drawing a distinct line between both genders and sexuality.

Moreover race, according to leading scholars Collins (1991); Bell (1992); Crenshaw (1995), suggest that race is a social construct, which filters into public policy. However, Devon Carbado argues that gender and sexuality are negotiated in black anti-racist politics when that negotiation manifests itself in a specific context (Carbado, 1999: 12-13). He further contends that black men often posit themselves into the discourse about gender and sexuality deploy patriarchy to the service of anti-racism, and defend patriarchy as being vital to the interest of the black community (Carbado, 1999: 13). Such arguments foster a relationship between racism and homophobia. However, such anti-racist discourse separates the two phenomena’s and marginalize gay blacks and lesbians differently.

Therefore, according to (Carbado, 1999: 26), racism and homophobia, perpetuates the notion that blackness — does not exist outside of gender or sexual orientation (when in all actuality all three identities co-exist simultaneously. For example, a heterosexual black man is never put in the position to choose between the ontology of being a man and being black at the same time; or being a black and being a heterosexual simultaneously (Carbado, 1999: 25). However, black gay men or lesbian women are not afforded the same opportunity as their heterosexual peers. Carbado argues, to be a strong heterosexual black man [or woman] is a good thing; but to be a strong emasculating black woman [or effeminate black man] quite typically is damaging (Carbado, 1999: 25). Because homosexuality is such a taboo subject, gay men that exhibit effeminate tendencies are subject to extreme cruel treatment by peers because of how they choose to express their gender performance. Therefore, black gay men are subjected to lead a closeted lifestyle and engage in what is called passing to play up their masculinity.

The performance of passing is defined as both a means of maintaining cultural membership, by assuming the necessary performance strategies that signal membership, as well as the conscious and unconscious choice to engage other performance that situate racial [and cultural] identity (Alexander, 2006). For example, a closeted gay ‘straight-acting’ man will talk about having sex with multiple women around his male peers to avoid the social and cultural strictures against homosexuality (Alexander, 2006). However, bisexual men are somewhat an exception to the rule. There are times when a bisexual man may have a girlfriend, or a wife, but will mess around with other bisexual men on the side, individuals who are also in committed relationships with women. Many people associate such a lifestyle with the down low phenomenon that often receives most of the blame for the high HIV/AIDS rate in the black community among heterosexual women. Overall, passing is a cultural performance used in the gay community, of which success largely depends on not overacting, which would call attention to the fact that a performance is actually being used (Alexander, 2006).

In Cool Pose: the Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America, Majors and Billson argue, “Being cool or adopting a cool pose is a strategy that men use to make sense of their everyday lives” (Majors et al., 1992). Acting cool has always played a vital role in the formation of masculinity. Youth today use “coolness as a mask [to fit in which contributes] to the high dropout rate among black males, and heightens their chances of engaging in substance abuse and juvenile delinquency” (Majors et al., 1992). Cool pose entails a multitude of advantages and disadvantages. ‘Cool’ masculinity,

Contributes to black masculinity in ways that includes dynamic and positive qualities such as dignity, respect, control, self-esteem, and social competence it helps protect the black man’s self-image and enables him to cope with assaults on manhood. Ironically, cool pose can inject strain into his most intimate relationships, get him in trouble with authorities, and reinforce an aloofness that stems from living too far from his deeper emotions (Majors et al, 1992).

In other words cool pose is about the way a black man use different patterns of speech, walk, and demeanor to maintain a sense of social competence to protect himself in the streets and against authority figures such as law enforcement and his employer. Cool pose gives agency to the marginalized masculinity and is used as a coping mechanism to the racist ideology that hegemony masculinity imposes on black masculinity. Moreover, hegemonic masculinity reasserts an identity that gives control to black men in a society that is continuously being restructured to favor the status quo.

To this end, social construction of masculinity and its impact on gay men contends that masculinity is constructed in terms of maleness, masculinity, sexual aggressiveness, and virility (Halkitis, 2000: 130). Perception of what it means to be masculine is commonly associated with a man’s physique, the concept of the masculine male is reserved for the heterosexual man (Halkitis, 2000: 131) and not his homosexual peers. Moreover, gay men are stereotyped as being effeminate, and Western society does not account for same-sex attraction as being masculine. Most straight acting gay men don’t want to be linked with effeminate behavior or an effeminate acting man in the hearts and minds of their friends and family (Kendall et al., 2006: 32). Therefore, to achieve standards of masculinity, gay men often spend
countless hours grooming them self to appear more masculine such as spending endless hours at the gym, cutting their hair razor-short, getting tattoos, and piercings. However, gay HIV-positive men often tie perceptions of masculinity to keeping their bodies strong, functional, and dispelling the myth that all gay HIV-positive men look sickly.

Access to Limited Healthcare

Access to adequate health in African nations is often a complex socio-political issue, especially for the queer community and those affected by the Human Immunodeficiency Virus and the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. Economic poverty and sexual exploitation goes hand-in-hand as it pertains to the treatment of the HIV/AIDS crisis across Africa. Oftentimes, people in Africa are relegated to depending on philanthropy to gain access to healthcare treatment more in developing countries whose citizens are able to rely on social welfare programs (Heimer, 2007: 551). Furthermore, governmental agencies dictate the international flow of resources, which further contributes to the institutional context of how HIV-positive patients treated for the sexually transmitted infection. Thus, the micro and macro, institutional governmental practices hinders who is able to gain access to life-prolonging drugs, how those drugs are paid for and priced; most importantly, how patients receive treatment from clinics. The nation-state and its relation to broader international market have fundamentally controlled healthcare inequalities.

Nation-state governments have attempted to control their country’s gay population by instituting discriminatory sodomy laws that local law enforcement used to police the gay community. Traditionally, sodomy laws have been used to criminalize, formulate, maintain, and control the social norms and consequent effects on individual behavior. Sodomy laws, even when unenforced, expresses contempt for certain classes of citizens [they] infringe on anyone’s liberty to engage in particular sexual practices (Goodman, 2001: 646). Sodomy laws infringe on the liberty and privacy of two consenting adults, who engage in an intimate encounter with one another. Moreover, it violated many queer individuals’ eighth amendment constitutional rights. Sodomy laws became a chief systematic way of South African society as a whole to let black gay men know that they were the scum of the earth (Goodman, 2001: 654). South Africa legality system during the latter half of the apartheid era is a good example of how sodomy laws affected the queer population.

Africa’s governmental response to the HIV/AIDS; more importantly, rhetoric used by African heads of state. Oftentimes, use rhetoric in political policies and strategies that make it seem like the HIV/AIDS pandemic is not as much of a human catastrophe. Public and private debates in Africa pertaining to Western political and scientific agencies role in solving the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa often ignore African views and perspectives, and have gone as far as to even silence the African on occasions (Ige et al, 2012: 3). People living in Africa often look to their respective nation-state the institution responsible for the management of geo-political space and allocating resources to meet those societal needs (Ige et al., 2012: 10). Public health services are one of many resources that that nation-state is responsible for providing to its citizens.

However, there are concerns with the state of Africa public health system given the continent’s history with colonialism, the way foreign aid is distributed to the respective states. First, the reshaping of states through structural adjustment programs often resembles neocolonialism. Second, citizenship, which is controlled by the national government or lack thereof, which poses a problem for those who are citizens of the state, but lack proper identification. Post-apartheid South African citizens who do not possess identity documents are frequently denied access to public health and social services in their own country” (Ige et al., 2012: 11). If a citizen lacks proper identification, the healthcare system acts very dismissive of those citizens as if they are foreigners in their own country. Furthermore, even if they do have proper identity documents healthcare has been tampered with so much by the promotion of private healthcare services (Ige et al., 2012: 11), and those who have formal employment benefit the most.

The global drug gap between “rich and poor countries arises from multiple market and government failures as well as from huge income difference” (Reich, 2000: 1979). Access to adequate pharmaceutical health care is very controversial in developing countries. For example, anti-retroviral drugs, which are essential for treating HIV-positive patients, have decreased by 48% in the U.S. in the late 1990s, while most of those infected with HIV worldwide continue to live in poor developing countries. In 1998, 67% of those living with HIV/AIDS lived in poor developing countries located in sub-Saharan Africa where 80% of HIV/AIDS patients (Reich, 2000: 1979) die because of inadequate access to essential drugs. Those who live in poor developing countries in Africa often face structural inequalities within the healthcare market which many times places a limit on their need for adequate healthcare treatment.

Cultural Factors in Education

Cultural factors in Africa often lead to educational inequalities as it pertains to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
Orphan-hood status, household socio-economic status, and child school enrollment across low-income countries are all factors contribute to educational inequalities. Orphan-hood in developing countries is predicated on overall poverty rate, socio-economic status of the household, adult mortality, customs and demographic factors such as child fostering and the extended family, existing demand for child schooling, and public policies that are already put in place (Ainsworth et al., 2006: 1100). While adult mortality from other infectious diseases disproportionately affects the poor, AIDS strikes both the poor and the non-poor.

Many times the educational system in South Africa has contributed to social constructions of gender and sexuality. School children's understanding of the AIDS crisis and the impact it has on gender and sexuality has been articulated against the backdrop of race and class. Children that were observed for this study were between the ages of six and eight years old. Although children are innocent as it pertains to sex and sexuality, many have demonstrated a good understanding about the construction of gender, sexuality, and HIV/AIDS all together. Children in this study were able to deploy knowledge of healthy eating and living, to defend themselves against the possibility of becoming infected (Bhana et al., 2007: 119). Furthermore, many kids were well aware of how dangers that high sexual-risk behaviors such as engaging in promiscuity and not using protection increases the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS.

To understand the ways in which gender and sexuality has been featured in the teaching methods of South African primary schools, Bhana (2009) compared two schools located in Durban, South Africa. Bhana focused on primary school educator's teaching methods and strategies to educate elementary South African school children about preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. In 2005 a Human Science Research Council study estimated the breakdown of Durban; South Africa HIV/AIDS prevalence rate to be 13% for blacks; 1.9% for coloreds; 1.6% for Indians, and 0.5% for whites” (Bhana, 2009: 167). Social forces were contributing factors to such a high HIV/AIDS prevalence rate are structural inequalities such poverty, racial and gender discrimination. Bhana asserts, kids who are the most socially and economically disadvantaged (Bhana, 2009: 168) are at a greater risk for contracting the disease due to the discourse of childhood innocence.

Furthermore, Bhana recognized that HIV prevention measures in elementary schools were limited because teachers oftentimes omitted the fact that having unprotected sexual intercourse can increase the risk of contracting the sexually transmitted disease. Instead, many primary school teachers focus on the biomedical aspect of the disease instead of providing discourse on life skills.

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Inequalities in Employment

Structural inequalities like high unemployment coupled with high rates of HIV/AIDS for black men contributes to individual inequalities as it pertains queer of colors being discriminated against because of their levels of masculinity and their gender performance. The macro-economic aspect of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa posits that as many as one in three adults in some African countries are infected with HIV/AIDS (Tavrow et al., 2008: 75). This tragic statistic affects the institution of the family, the agriculture sector, and the business sector in various ways. HIV/AIDS is continues to destroy families and very often children to become orphans at an early age.

The agricultural sector is hit hard because families are not able to farm effectively thus contributing to lower crop yields and food insecurities” (Tavrow et al, 2008:75). Thus, HIV/AIDS is the main culprit in killing off mass amounts of skilled workers and many businesses pay higher insurance premiums for their skilled workers because of absenteeism, while experiencing a reduction in productivity. Adults most likely to be infected were those who were mobile such as traders, businessmen, fishermen, and transportation workers, not just the poor (Ainsworth et al., 2006: 1101). Workers like these many times do not have access limited or no access at all to adequate health care because their jobs often keep them on the move.

The tertiary sector which isthe apex of the educational and medical institutions the training ground for the next generation of political leaders, managers, educators, researchers, doctors, lawyers, journalists, and other professionals (Tavrow et al., 2008: 76-77) are suffering dramatically because of low retention rates for personnel and the limited amount of resources. Much of the problem is due to brain drain, which cause a ripple effect throughout Africa’s economy. For example, America tends to recruit the best and the brightest of Africa’s educators, researchers, and medical personnel. Many Africans who are educated in America, oftentimes remain
in America after graduation because of better economic opportunities, juxtapose to returning to their original country of origin.

CONCLUSION

In summary, gender and sexuality have been socially constructed in Africa. This social construction has created many inequalities for those individuals who identify as queer. Access to adequate healthcare, quality education, and better employment opportunities all play a vital role in shaping the dynamics of how queers of color and those affected by the HIV/AIDS virus. Both political figures and public policy makers should move to practice and design better strategies that address all three aspects of Africa political economy in order to give every citizen of Africa, especially those black queer citizens of South Africa a better quality of life.

As scholars suggests intersectionality continues to dominate structural inequalities. This continues to create a socio-economic disadvantage for those who identify with certain race, gender, class, and sexual orientation in the contemporary period. Furthermore, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has gotten way out of control. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations need to come together to figure out an effective strategy of talking about the pandemic if they are serious about eradicating the disease. Although people of color who identify as queer are protected under South Africa new constitution in some instances, there’s a greater need for future research that addresses gay rights so that queers of color are accepted as a group of human beings rather than tolerated on paper and marginalized in practice.

Post-apartheid has given the African National Congress an opportunity to commit to gender equity and queer rights. The mass media in particular, such as South African soaps, which air throughout the day and into the night, have begun to integrate queer characters of color into their storylines. The integration of non-pathological gay characters in the soap Isidingo is evidence of remarkable transformation of the country’s mass media in the wake of apartheid demise (Barnard, 2006: 48). Such a move challenges the political discourse of the country’s past and tolerance of those who choose not to abide by hetero-normative standards in society.

REFERENCES